

ABSTRACT

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

AND SELF-ACTUALIZATION OF RECENT LGBTQ HIGH

SCHOOL GRADUATES

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Dissertation dated May 2020

This study will examine what variables impact LGBTQ high school graduates achieving academic performance and self-actualization. High school is a key period for any young adult. During this time, their sexuality and gender identity are developed and decided upon. As reported by the Institute of Medicine (2011), earlier research on LGBTQ young people has indicated that coming out during this time period can present many challenges due to the prevalence of societal homophobia and transphobia and their negative effects on adolescents. Therefore, this study was based on the premise to investigate the impact attendance, self-love, family acceptability, family support, internal support, school climate, safety, and bullying have on the academic performance and self-actualization of LGBTQ high school graduates. This research was conducted through a mixed method approach in which data was collected, then analyzed. The use of a mixed-

method approach is to gather data from LGBTQ high school graduates and interviews from 3 other members of the LGBTQ with lived experiences. The researcher collected data, conducted interviews, analyzed data, reported data results and utilized a Qualtrics survey.

For instance, this study was conducted with LGBTQ high school graduates in the Atlanta, Georgia area. The lived experiences described herein may not translate wholly or in part to the lived experiences of LGBTQ students in other parts of the United States or abroad. Rather, this study can serve as a basis for further exploration of related research questions. The research design of this study and its findings may be helpful as a benchmark for other studies, including but not limited to studies of LGBTQ students of other sexual minorities. There is also value for more research on self-actualization of other groups of students; the LGBTQ sample may represent a dynamic found in other marginalized groups.

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SCHOOL GRADUATES

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY
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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

MAY 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to first thank my mother, O’Neal Walker White, my angel in the sky, who taught me so much through wisdom, persistence, and unconditional love. Without her help and support, I would not be here today. To my partner “DMB” who is the epitome of beauty and love, I hope to only inspire him one day the way he has inspired me. I thank my best friends who keep me motivated. The past few years at Clark Atlanta University have been a wonderful experience. Special thanks go to Barbara Hill, who walked with me through the final stages of this journey. I extend my deepest thanks to the Educational Leadership Department staff and mentors, and to all those who I failed to mention.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Student academic performance and factors that can impact that achievement is a construct that has received increasing attention in the school psychology literature in recent years (Hazel, Vazirabadi, Albanes, & Gallagher, 2014; Hazel, Vazirabadi, & Gallagher, 2013). Impacts on student achievement has many modifiable factors that can predict student academic outcomes such as grades, truancy, and dropping out, as well as nonacademic outcomes such as depression, substance abuse, and delinquency (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Hazel et al., 2013; Lam et al., 2014; Li et al., 2011; Wang & Fredricks, 2014; Wang & Peck, 2013). However, little research has examined the construct among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) students, a subpopulation that faces increased risk factors (such as harassment, bullying, and a hostile school climate) that may affect academic performance and behaviors at school. While researchers have previously examined school contextual factors—such as the presence of safe adults or a gay-straight alliance—in relation to academic and psychosocial outcomes for LGBTQ students, there is a dearth of research examining how such contextual factors may connect to student school engagement for this population.

Social scientists have studied factors that affect LGBTQ students' college experiences for many years (Longerbeam, Inkelas, Johnson, & Lee, 2007; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010). A critical gap in the literature relates to Maslow's

theory of human motivation, specifically in understanding factors that affect LGBTQ students' ability to achieve self-actualization during their school career (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Maslow, 1943; Rankin et al., 2010; Rockman, 2013). To self-actualize is to reach one's full potential, to make one's true self his or her daily reality, including achieving full use of one's capacities and talents (Crain, 2016; Maslow, 1943, 1962. Research suggests that discrimination, heterosexism, homophobia, and microaggression may affect LGBTQ college students' ability to self-actualize fully (Maslow, 1943; Nadal, 2013; Rockman, 2013). LGBTQ students' perceptions of their college's campus climate, including discrimination, heterosexism, homophobia and microaggression, may hinder their ability to achieve the highest level of self-actualization (Nadal, 2013; Rockman, 2013).

Emergent research indicates a high degree of bullying and emotional distress amongst youth who identify as or are perceived by peers as sexual minorities. Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, and Azrael (2009) conducted a Lesbian and Straight Education Network survey that received more than 8,500 responses from LGBTQ high school students regarding their perceptions of school climate. Almeida et al. found that 82% of LGBTQ students reported experiencing verbal harassment while at school and 71% reported hearing negative comments and name calling associated with epithets for sexual minorities including *faggot* or *dyke* often or frequently. Additional study findings indicated that LGBTQ students felt more unsafe at school and were more likely to miss school due to concerns about personal safety. Moreover, results indicated a lack of

intervention by school personnel in relation to LGBTQ bullying and harassment, which tended to result in further isolation of LGBTQ students (Almeida et al., 2009).

The results of the study by Almeida et al. (2009) were consistent with other research into school climate, bullying, and emotional distress with LGBTQ youth. Almeida et al. evaluated emotional distress among students in Grades 9-12 using a racially and ethnically diverse sample of black (45%), Hispanic (31%), and white (14%). Approximately, 10% of respondents reported being LGBTQ. LGBTQ youth scored significantly higher on scales measuring depressive symptomology, more likely to report suicidal ideation (30% for sexual minority youth versus 6% for non-sexual minority youth), and more likely to self-harm (21% for sexual minority youth versus 6% for non-sexual minority youth). The concept of perceived discrimination was associated with increased depressive symptomatology among both LGBTQ females and males. It was also associated with an increased risk of self-harm and suicidal ideation in LGBTQ males, which established perceived discrimination as a possible contributor to emotional distress in LGBTQ youth (Almeida, 2009).

LGBTQ students, as a demographic, constitute a unique student population because they exist as an invisible minority. As Toynton (2006) noted, LGBTQ identities are invisible because they cannot be identified by their look or their faces. Individuals' sexual orientation and gender identity cannot be determined by their physical appearance; thus, their minority status is invisible (Clarke, Peel, Riggs, & Ellis, 2010). As a result of this invisibility, many researchers contend that conducting research is made difficult because participants are hidden or more difficult to locate. For this reason, Sanlo and

Espinoza (2012) argued that, “The LGBTQ college population is invisible . . . in much of the literature” (p. 477). According to Johnson, Oxendine, Taub, and Robertson (2013), “The lack of statistics on LGBTQ students is further increased given that institutions of higher education typically do not collect demographic information such as sexual orientation or gender identity or expression from their students” (p. 59). Research from Campus Pride, however, reveals the startling results about discrimination and harassment experienced by LGBTQ students on college campuses (Rankin et al., 2010). Despite negative attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities, visibility for LGBTQ people has increased (directly resulting from an increase of rights and social acceptability) over the last few decades (Bond, 2015; Burgess & Baunach, 2014). Consequently, colleges and universities are charged with providing adequate resources for LGBTQ identified students (Fine, 2012).

The bullying and harassment experienced by youth who identify as sexual minorities interferes with the school environment and inhibits learning in several ways. LGBTQ youth identified bullying as the second most important problem in their lives, after unaccepting family. On the other hand, their heterosexual counterparts identified classes, tests, or grades as the second biggest problem in their lives. LGBTQ youth who experience higher rates of harassment have lower grade point averages. A recent survey indicated that more than one third of LGBTQ students missed one day of school over the past month due to fear for their personal safety. LGBTQ students experienced high rates of isolation and lack of advocacy for their safety, mental health, and academic needs.

Daley et al. argued that LGBTQ youth with intersectional minority identities, such as youth who are both sexual and racial and ethnic minorities face additional discrimination and violence. In their narrative research, a thematic analysis revealed two themes related to LGBTQ and racial and ethnic minority identity: (a) you choose sexuality, or you chose race and (b) multiple wires together create the cage. They concluded that their findings were indicative of the pertinence of using intersectional approach to both conceptualizing and addressing anti-LGBTQ bullying. Based on the research by Daley et al., this method is paramount to exploring the differing experiences of bullying and harassment that LGBTQ youth face. They warned that research and advocacy around LGBTQ youth should not assume that bullying based on an identity as a sexual minority is either the primary or only form of harassment, bullying, or violence faced by LGBTQ youth (Mishna, Newman, Daley, & Solomon, 2009).

School counselors should strive to foster a school environment that provides affirmation and respect for LGBTQ students, according to the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) Ethical Standards (2004) and position statement (Gonzalez, 2007). Moreover, the ASCA framework is multidimensional and calls for school counselors to use collaboration, leadership, data, and consultation to advocate for student success in cooperation with student, parents, school personnel, and community members in order to effect systemic change. Emergent literature illustrates recent changes within the school counseling profession with scholars in the field of education focused on the need for school counselors to become advocates to address issues of social oppression in the school setting (Gonzalez, 2007). However, despite the call for school counselor

advocacy, currently there is limited empirical research related to school counselor advocacy with LGBTQ students. Moreover, the research related to school counselor advocacy for LGBTQ students who are also racial and ethnic minorities is even more limited (Gonzalez, 2017). This gap illustrates the necessity of research into the experience of bullying and harassment of LGBTQ African-American youth and the efforts of school counselors to serve as advocates of against anti-LGBTQ bullying and anti-racial and ethnic bullying of students that are both sexual and racial and ethnic minorities.

With the changing climate found in both private and public schools today, it is important that teachers and counselors have experience and knowledge regarding LGBTQ issues in schools. Students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender often face bullying from their peers, among other problems. These students want to know that they can turn to their teachers and counselors for help.

Many training programs now offer classes that help counselors and teachers eliminate the personal biases they might have against certain groups. Teachers and school counselors face more social issues than ever before and must know how to help every student they see throughout the school year. Training programs now offer courses designed to teach future counselors more about LGBTQ issues and how to best support the students in these communities. The idea of starting an LGBTQ organization on a high school campus was hard to imagine a few years ago, but there are now around 3,000 of these programs in the United States. As a current/future counselor, you may receive training on how to start or best advise one of these programs in your school. Counselors

working as advisors often help students find a place to meet in school, assist with fundraising programs, and offer general advice and support to members (Biegel, Stuart, & James Kuehl, 2010).

According to the Office of Civil Rights, the counselor at the high school level assumes several roles, all important and potentially critical in affecting a student's future. These roles relate in a major way to academic preparation and planning, but they also extend to mental health, interpersonal relations, social adjustment, career planning, and work adjustment. In performing these varied roles, the professional commitment of the counselor is directed at promoting the fullest development of everyone (Russell, Stephen & Fish, 2016). A variety of barriers has acted to limit this ideal with respect to LGBTQ minorities, women, and handicapped students. These are reflected in the most recent national education statistics. For example, the reading proficiency of minority students, while advancing, needs further improvement. The high school completion rates for LGBTQ minorities lag far behind those of LGBTQ white students. Enrollment of minority students in higher education programs is substantially below that of white students. Women and minorities continue to be underrepresented in engineering, mathematics, and other scientific and technical fields (Simons, 2017).

Problem Statement

The ability for LGBTQ high school students 18 years of age and older to attain self-actualization and deal with external factors while in high school is affected by a variety of factors (Dugan & Yurman, 2011; Woodford et al., 2012). LGBTQ students tend to experience various challenges during high school that can affect their academic

performance and reaching self-actualization (Dugan & Yurman, 2011; Longerbeam et al., 2007).

Purpose of the Study

Globally, there is an intense motivation to improve student academic performance. Adolescence is a key period for any young adult. During this time, their sexuality and gender identity is developed and decided upon. As reported by the Institute of Medicine (2011), early research on LGBTQ young people has indicated that coming out during this time period can present many challenges due to the prevalence of societal homophobia and transphobia and their negative effects on adolescents. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the impact attendance, self-love, family acceptability, family support, internal support, school climate, safety, and bullying have on the academic performance of high school students who are 18 years of age and older.

Significance of the Study

Prior research has indicated that LGBTQ youth are at a higher risk for engaging in pejorative health behaviors and for being victimized in the school setting. Research identified specific benefits for LGBTQ youth associated with attending a high school with a gay-straight alliance. These benefits included lower levels of suicidality, an improved school experience, and less alcohol uses and psychological distress (Heck, Flentje, & Cochran, 2011).

A total of 11,447 high school students were surveyed to test the relation between victimization and the educational outcomes of truancy, post-high school intentions, and

grades for LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ students. LGBTQ students reported statistically higher truancy, lower grades, greater expectations not to finish high school, and lower expectations to attend a 4-year college. Victimization partially mediated these differences between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ youth. These results highlight the role of victimization in partially accounting for academic disparities between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ youth.

The Lesbian and Straight Education Network study (Gonzalez, 2017) results indicated that supportive school officials contribute to a more positive and safer school climate. These results clearly illustrated the need for school officials, such as counselors and educators, to provide education and advocacy to improve the school experience, mental health outcomes, and academic outcomes of LGBTQ youth. Advocacy and effective leadership by school officials can help reduce bullying and harassment faced by LGBTQ youth that serve as a catalyst for negative outcomes. This role is not only crucial for the well-being of students who are sexual minorities, but it also aligns with the current evolution of the school counselor position. Gonzalez noted that the past decade has given rise to a more proactive and advocacy focused approach to school counseling in which school counselors serve as social justice advocates and agents of systemic change.

Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, and Palmer (2012) clearly indicated the deleterious impact on both the mental health and academic performance of sexual minority youth. In addition to higher rates of suicidal ideation, LGBTQ youth are likely to experience a variety of mental health related issues. One issue is the use and abuse of substances; sexual minority youth are more than two times as likely to experiment with

drugs and alcohol compared to non-sexual minority youth counterparts. In addition to increased depressed symptomology, only 37% of LGBTQ youth state that they are happy compared to 67% for non-LGBTQ. Statistics related to self-harm are extremely alarming with every occurrence of verbal or physical harassment making the risk of self-harm among LGBTQ youth 2.5 times more likely. Finally, LGBTQ youth are four times more likely to attempt suicide than non-LBGTQ youth (Kosciw et al., 2012).

Factors impacting student achievement have received increasing attention from researchers in recent years in terms of how it relates to students' academic achievement, behavior at school, and likelihood of graduating. Yet, little research has examined this construct among LGBTQ students, a subpopulation that faces increased risk factors (such as harassment, bullying, and a hostile school climate) that may affect academic outcomes and behaviors at school. Even fewer studies of LGBTQ youth have included a breakdown within their analyses by race, gender identity, or social class when it comes to engagement. However, this study provides insightful information valuable to all students, parents, and schools. Understanding the factors that impact a child's academic achievement can serve as a guide for school officials to make sure all needs of students, regardless of sexual orientation are being met.

Research Questions

- RQ1. What factors or experiences support LGBTQ student's efforts to strive toward self-actualization in high school? (Rankin et al., 2010; Rockman, 2013; Teman & Lahman, 2010)

- RQ2. What factors or experiences interfere with LGBTQ high school students' efforts to strive toward academic performance? (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Marine, 2011; Rockman, 2013)
- RQ3. What can be discovered about LGBTQ high school students' perceptions and attitudes regarding campus climate (including their perceptions of discrimination, support, and bullying)? (Maslow, 1987; Nadal, 2013; Renn, 2007)

The researcher developed a questionnaire that asks what factors and experiences support and/or interfere with LGBTQ student's efforts. Answering these questions aided in understanding what variables stand in the way of academic achievement for LGBTQ students who 18 years of age are and older. Also, the survey can help services students are using, and perhaps which services are less valuable or under-utilized. Isolating responses from LGBTQ students who are and are not engaged created a baseline comparison. This helped to determine if it was LGBTQ students' involvement in the LGBTQ services, or if it was involvement in general that had an impact.

Definition of Terms and Concepts

Attendance. The frequency which a student attends class.

Bisexual. A person who is emotionally, physically, spiritually, and sexually attracted both to persons of the same sex and the opposite sex.

Bullying. Seek to harm, intimidate, or coerce

Cisgender/Cis. This term describes a person whose gender identity matches the sex that was assigned at birth. The term cisgender is not indicative of gender expression,

sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life (Trans Student Educational Resources, 2016).

Closeted. A gay man, lesbian woman, or bisexual person who is not open about his or her sexual identity. Such a person would not be open or public about his or her sexual orientation during participation in extracurricular activities on campus

Coming-out. The act of publicly acknowledging oneself as a person who is gay, lesbian, or bisexual

Engagement. The act of joining and remaining involved with an extracurricular or cocurricular on-campus activity

Extracurricular activities. Any short-term or long-term programs or opportunities offered without academic credit or association with a course in which college students receive benefits from recreation, training, and socialization. A variety of topics and skills, such as self-confidence, time management, and public speaking are available through many extracurricular activities. Such activities often promote ethics, integrity, teamwork, and multicultural inclusion among other values, many of which are developmentally desirable for students' well-rounded growth.

Family acceptability. Acknowledgment and acceptance of how student identifies

Family support. The level in which family's support, encourage, and respect the student's decisions as being a part of the LGBTQ community.

Gay. A homosexual, especially a man.

Internal support. The level which school personal, such as counselors, teachers, and administrators, engage, support, and help navigate LGBTQ students through an issue.

Lesbian. A homosexual woman.

LGBTQ. This acronym denotes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer identity. In this study, with the exception of “queer,” students will self-select one of these gender or sexual minority identities. This acronym is being used as an umbrella terms and is likened to similar acronyms such as LGBTQIA++ (. . . intersex, allies, and including all other sexual and gender identities), LBTTQQIAAAP (. . . questioning, intersex, allies, asexual, agender, pansexual), GSD (gender and sexual diversities), etc. In order to state this concept concisely and recognizably, but with critical awareness of the historical erasure of identities and the importance of named identities (Pilcher, 2016), the acronym LGBTQ will signify any student who identifies as non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgender. This includes, but is not limited to, the previously listed identities.

LGBTQ Resource Centers/LGBTQ Resource Center. In this study LGBTQ resource centers is stated to describe all LGBTQ resource centers, programming and services. When “the LGBTQ Resource Center” is stated, it is referring to the specific center named Get Hip Get Connected. It can be assumed that either identifier refers to the physical space as well as the respective programming and services that each offer.

Outness. The degree to which an individual is open about their sexual orientation or gender identity. The level of outness may differ by relationship type (e.g., family, friends, classmates, co-workers).

Safety. How safe a student’s feels while on school property, attending school events.

School climate. The dominant attitudes, opinions, principles, and actions expressed by or associated with community members at an institution of learning. The level in which the overall school (including teachers and students) functions, supports, and understands LGBTQ students' needs and differences.

Self-actualization. The realization or fulfillment of one's talents and potentialities, especially considered as a drive or need present in everyone

Self-love. The level which a student respects him/herself and how they let others treat them. Also, speaks to a student's comfortability, body image, and self-awareness

Sexual minority. A group whose sexual identity, orientation, or practices differ from most of the surrounding society. Primarily used to refer to LGB individuals, it can also refer to transgender, genderqueer (including third gender) or intersex individuals.

Student engagement. Student engagement has been described in a variety of ways and is often described relative to student success outcomes. For the purposes of this study, this term describes a student's connection to the institution through experience, social impact, and connections with peers, faculty, staff, and administration.

Student involvement. When students make a psychological investment in learning. student involvement also refers to a "student's willingness, need, desire and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in, the learning process promoting higher level thinking for enduring understanding.

Student success. Kuh (2006) described student success, "in a broad, all-encompassing manner to include academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and

competencies, persistence, attainment of educational objectives including graduation, and post-college performance” (p. 3).

They/them/their. When used as a singular form, they/them/there is the most commonly accepted gender-neutral pronoun(s) to describe individuals whose gender identity falls outside of the ascribed gender binary (LaScotte, 2016). According to recent changes to acceptable pronoun usage announced by the Associated Press (Easton, 2017), “they/them/there is acceptable in limited cases as a singular and-or gender-neutral pronoun . . . [and] if they/them/their use is essential, explain in the text that the person prefers a gender-neutral pronoun” (#234).

Transman. A female-to-male transsexual.

Transwoman. A male-to-female transsexual.

Role of the Researcher

It is imperative to state that the researcher’s bias contributed to the development of this study. The researcher’s identity as a member of the LGBTQ community has contributed to the assumption that LGBTQ identified students who are engaged with the LGBTQ Resource Center are more engaged and successful than those who do not. However, the researcher was open to the idea that there would be no relationship or that students who are engaged have worse academic outcomes.

Summary

The factors that affect LGBTQ students’ academic performance in high school present significant questions that affect many students and their families (Dugan &

Yurman, 2011; Messinger, 2009; Rankin et al., 2010). If the high school years represent one of the more significant experiences in a young adult's life (Rankin et al., 2010; Stewart & Howard-Hamilton, 2014). Experiences during high school and college can support or hinder a student's ability to reach their full potential through lifelong development—to attain full self-actualization. It is important, therefore, that LGBTQ students and their families have access to information that will assist in their learning, including assessing school clubs and programs along with resources designed to support out GLB students (Cegler, 2012; Dugan & Yurman, 2011; Messinger, 2009). Factors such as homophobia and anti-gay discrimination in high school can affect student performance. The importance of a supportive community continues to affect LGBTQ students and their ability to self-actualize throughout high school and beyond (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011; Fraser, 2014).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the existing literature applicable to this study. It examines significant aspects of the study including a historical overview student academic performance and providing research results for all variables. The relevant literature concerning variables that can influence self-actualization and student academic performance amongst LGBTQ high school students is limited. Although there is a lack of literature that provides insight and enriched understandings of this study; there is some literature to complement the research. Most importantly, the literature illustrates the affect certain factors can have on students who identify as LGBTQ.

The first major theme in the literature is the school climate for LGBTQ people and how it impacts a student's ability to be successful in high school. The school climate often predicts the presence of an LGBTQ resource center. A small pocket of literature exists that directly addresses the functioning of LGBTQ resource centers, and several consortiums and professional organizations exist who directly measure these outcomes. Additionally, the role of student identity development and sexual orientation/gender identity development, as well as what it means to engage students through this development was present throughout much of the literature. Several secondary themes emerged, including queer theory and intersectionality, but most notably is the increasing

visibility of LGBTQ students, faculty, and staff on high schools' grounds. As evidenced below, many gaps in the literature on LGBTQ students exist, namely the variables which influence self-actualization and student academic performance amongst LGBTQ high school students.

Academic Performance

The foundation of academic performance is deeply rooted in two theories: Julian Rotter's (1966) locus of control and Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943). Each adult learning theory has created a dichotomy in the understanding of academic performance. Throughout the years, additional research has been conducted on academic performance that continues the evolution of the concept. The theory of locus of control has been extensively researched for the past several decades. The application of this theory to academic achievement and related behaviors has been thoroughly examined. Revisions and modifications of Rotter's I-E scale has created many age-appropriate scales, which in turn has led to specific research for a variety of populations. The role of gender regarding locus of control is also a popular subject of study. For the purposes of this study, it is imperative to review the past literature concerning the relationship between locus of control and academic performance/achievement, while considering the possible effect of gender identification.

Theory and research on academic performance emerged in the mid-1980s to address the questions of how students become masters of their own learning process. Neither a mental ability nor an academic performance skill, self-regulation refers instead to the self-directive process through which learners transform their mental abilities into

task-related academic skills. Walberg's theory of academic performance and achievement posits that psychological characteristics of individual students and their immediate psychological environments influence cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal educational outcomes (Reynolds & Walberg, 1992).

Locus of Control and Academic Performance

The literature available on locus of control and academic achievement was reviewed by Findley and Cooper (1983). They compiled 98 studies (consisting of 275 testable hypotheses) where locus of control and academic achievement measure was compared. A statistically significant positive correlation was found for 193 of the 275 hypotheses; 70% of these hypotheses found students with internal locus of control to have significantly higher academic achievement than students with external locus of control. Bar-Tal and Bar Zohar (1977) reviewed 36 studies that examined the relationship between locus of control and academic achievement among children, adolescents, and adults and found a positive correlation between the two variables, regardless of population being examined.

According to Ray (1980), these conclusions are expected based on Rotter's theory of locus of control. An individual with internal control expects to be rewarded for performing specific behaviors. Therefore, the internal individual exerts the efforts to achieve academically, and feels great pride when it is obtained. This positive emotional experience, in turn, makes achievement more appealing, which increases the performances of specific behaviors, and strengthens the expectation of reward.

Conversely, an individual with external control views rewards as a product of chance. Therefore, the external individuals are not motivated to perform specific behaviors, because an expectation between behavior and reward is not established. When success does occur, an emotional response does not occur, because the success is not believed to be a result of own behaviors. Ray (1980) believed an individual's perception of control creates different emotional responses. Therefore, the effect of emotional responses on motivation is fundamental to theory of locus of control and its relationship with academic achievement.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study was based on Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs as explained at length in his work entitled *A Theory of Human Motivation* (1943). Maslow stated that all humans are motivated to meet five basic needs. Those needs in hierarchal order are (a) physiological, (b) safety, (c) love, (d) esteem, and (e) self-actualization. Maslow stated that these needs are driven by instinct. Before humans can move from a lower need to a higher need, the lower need must first be met.

Physiological needs include homeostasis, breathing, food, sexual desires, sleep, and water. Once physiological needs have been met, humans then seek to meet safety needs. They want stability in their lives. When humans are relatively safe and secure, they then seek to love and be loved by others. They hunger for affection and belonging. They want to form friendships and relationships with others.

After humans have formed loving relationships with others, they then move to fulfill the next need—esteem. All people need to feel satisfied and confident. They desire self-respect and the respect of others. Self-esteem leads to self-confidence, capability, and a feeling of usefulness in the world.

After self-esteem needs have been satisfied, people can seek to meet the next need and highest need—self-actualization. People desire to be self-fulfilled. Maslow explained that if a person is not doing what he is fitted to do, he will soon become restless and

discontented. Maslow (1943) stated that, “A artist must paint, a musician must make music, a poet must write if he is to be ultimately happy. What a man can be, he must be” (p. 50).

Maslow’s (1943) theory of human motivation applies to all humans. According to Maslow, all humans have needs that must be fulfilled if they are to be satisfied and reach self-actualization. Thus, it can be presumed that Maslow’s theory includes those in the sexual minority. LGBTQ students, like heterosexual individuals, seek to fill physiological, safety, love, and esteem needs. They, too, seek to become self-actualized. LGBTQ students who are victimized by their peers may have difficulty fulfilling their physiological, safety, love, and esteem needs. Research has shown that students who are victimized by their peers may experience eating disorders and have difficulty sleeping (Sansone & Sansone, 2008); they do not feel safe (Graham, 2006; Williams et al., 2005); they are lonely and socially isolated (Storch, Brassard, & Masia-Warner, 2003; Weiler, 2004); and they have low self-esteem (Billups, 2009; Seals & Young, 2003). If lower order needs are left unfulfilled, LGBTQ students who are victimized by their peers will not reach self-actualization and be completely happy. Nor, as Maslow stated, will they become what they can and must be.

Maslow (1943) explained that, “The average child in our society generally prefers a safe, orderly, predictable, organized world, which he can count on, and in which unexpected, unmanageable or other dangerous things do not happen” (p. 8).

Unfortunately, for victimized LGBTQ youth, school is not such a place. Kilman (2009)

explained that school is hardly ever a safe space for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning youth, much less an atmosphere that is conducive to teaching and learning.

Summary

This study was conducted to identify perceptions associated with academic performance and self-actualization as it relates to different variables. The selected theoretical framework helped examine the perception of LGBTQ lived experiences in order to provide a better understanding of the independent variable. The correspondence between the research and theory allowed the researcher to analyze the data collected to define association of factors contributing to academic achievement and self-actualization amongst high school LGBTQ graduates who attended a local LGBTQ center.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter is based on the research methodology to establish the framework for completing the research inquiry. The research methodology gives a description of the design, setting, collection procedures, and instruments. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship among the external factors of LGBTQ high school students who were 18 years of age and older, self-actualization and academic performance. The external factors which may impact self-actualization and academic performance are (a) attendance, (b) self-love, (c) family acceptability, (d) family support, (e) internal support, (f) school climate, (g) safety, (h) bullying, and (i) diverse external support. The chapter provides a description and discussion on the mixed methodology. Chapter IV also discusses the sample procedures and methods for data collection to draw meaning from the data collected.

Mixed-Method Approach

This research was conducted through a mixed method approach in which data was collected, then analyzed. The use of a mixed method approach is to gather data from LGBTQ high school graduates and interviews from three other members of the LGBTQ with lived experiences. The researcher collected data, conducted interviews, analyzed data, reported data results and utilized a Qualtrics survey.

Research was not conducted until the researcher received approval from the Institutional Review Board of Clark Atlanta University and the instruments were revised based on the suggestions of the dissertation research committee. All items used for the research were created based on the review of literature and observation of the study population. The high school graduate survey and interview guide was created by the researcher.

Research Design

Although I structured my surveys with the constructivist grounded theory in mind, I assessed data using a grounded theory approach, an inductive approach to data analysis designed to highlight emergent themes (Glaser 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Constructivist grounded theory is a popular method for research studies primarily in the disciplines of psychology, education, and nursing. Using a grounded theory approach means that I did not set out with the purpose of simply confirming the presence, or lack thereof, among participants. Rather, analysis of participant responses allowed me to identify emergent themes regarding the external factors that impact LGBTQ high school students' academic performance, achievement, and self-actualization. These themes are not necessarily consistent with all those in this group but represent actual lived experiences and cognitive processes as reported by respondents. Grounded theory is a methodology that seeks to construct theory about issues of importance in peoples' lives (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It does this through a process of data collection that is often described as

inductive in nature (Morse, 2001), in that the researcher has no preconceived ideas to prove or disprove. Rather, issues of importance to participants emerge from the stories that they tell about an area of interest that they have in common with the researcher. A mixed method study approach was used for the proposed study to collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data. A primary data collection method was used through the development of a survey administered online using Qualtrics software.

Description of the Setting and History

The data were collected from Get Hip Get Connected (GHGC) drop-in center, a subsidiary agency of the parent organization—National AIDS Education & Services for Minorities (NAESM). NAESM builds a community of black gay men to eliminate the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and other health conditions that disproportionately affect our community. NAESM fosters a climate of trust, integrity, and respect that encourages the provision of quality services. The GHGC Center's mission is to provide a safe, respected space and to create programs, services, and activities dedicated to the personal growth and development of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual youth in the Metro Atlanta area. The vision of the GHGC drop-in center is to educate, encourage, empower, and enlightened lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) youth through programs and services specific to those demographics.

NAESM was founded in 1990 by Rudolph H. Carn, the late Madam Edna Brown, and Mae Gratis Reed. NAESM's founders saw a need to address the HIV/Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) epidemic that infected and affected their friends,

neighbors, and partners. The organization was established to address health disparities that disproportionately impacted the African-

American community, particularly black gay men. Founders Carn, Brown, and Reed formed a community-based organization on the human principle love. The organization's motto, "We Love You, Love Yourself, Be Healthy" was created to assure the targeted population that NAESM cares, vows to be a support system, and ultimately help individuals live healthier lives.

For more than 25 years, the organization has prioritized its mission to increase minority populations' access to free-HIV testing, linkage to care and treatment in the Atlanta Metropolitan area and throughout the state of Georgia. Originally, NAESM's response to the incidence rates of HIV/AIDS infections involved community outreach through educational sessions, group meetings, and peer-lead programs. These programs were designed to educate and inform individuals about HIV prevention, fight stigma and discrimination. As medical technology advanced, NAESM became the leading organization to successfully conduct HIV testing throughout disenfranchised and impoverished communities where African Americans reside and work. Subsequently, NAESM was recognized as a leading national organization that served black gay men throughout the United States with community mobilization projects, health education sessions, public health campaigns, and HIV testing and linkage to care services.

In many ways, the organization has continued to develop innovative strategies to conduct HIV prevention activities to help reduce percentage of new HIV infections. In

addition, NAESM aims to assure that those individuals living with HIV have quick, affordable, and culturally sensitive medical care. This approach is reflected not only in the incredible partnerships the organization has developed throughout the years, but by NAESM's ability to provide culturally competent care to Atlanta communities.

Sample Procedures

This study focused on the relationship between external factors of LGBTQ high school graduates who were 18 years of age and older, self-actualization and academic performance. The researcher worked with the organization to create awareness about the survey that was administered. The sample size was 22, which was based on the number of surveys completed through the Qualtrics system.

Working with Human Subjects

The data gathered from the study will remain confidential. The survey was first approved by the CEO of the GHGC organization, and all survey takers signed an informed consent document (see Appendix A). The electronic informed consent form was required by the students before proceeding with the survey. The participant's identity will remain concealed as the instrument did not ask for name or any other identifying information. Each participant was informed of their right to refuse to answer any question they felt were too personal, inappropriate, or that made him uncomfortable. Participants were also informed of all the possible side effects of participating in the study and directed to resources that would assist them should they experience any negative side effects.

Instrumentation

In order to ensure that all topics of interest were addressed in the interviews, the survey was structured around various “sensitizing concepts” (van den Hoonaard, 1997). Sensitizing concepts are theoretical tools that emphasize the distinctive properties that may be associated with a class of data—in this case, the relationship between external factors of LGBTQ high school graduates who were 18 years of age and older, self-actualization and academic performance. These concepts offer researchers a general sense of reference and orientation without constraining new paths for theoretical discovery. Viewed broadly, they also refer to concepts that may have been generated from other research or theoretical speculation.

The study consisted of an online survey and three interviews, which were conducted with individuals outside of the community center who were members of the LGBTQ community. All three of the participants now have graduate degrees and have been working with high school students of all backgrounds. One-on-one interviewing was chosen to ensure that all participants were engaged. The interviews were conducted using a social constructivism approach. Specifically, questions were broad and general to allow participants to construct meaning of the situation and interaction with the researcher (Creswell, 2013). This was essential in understanding the phenomena being explored. Survey questions were aligned with research questions. The survey protocol began with an overview of the study and review of confidentiality. A script was used at the beginning and end of the survey to guide the process (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

The sample size for the survey was 22 LGBTQ high school graduates who were 18 years of age or older. An instrument was developed by the primary researcher and members of the dissertation committee (see Appendix B). The questionnaire asked about participants' gender, school attendance, and academic performance. Validity required asking each participant the same questions. Quantitatively, electronic survey links were provided to each LGBTQ high school graduate who were 18 years of age and older in order to collect data on dependent and independent variables. Participants were recruited by working with the community center staff. The electronic survey links were pre-loaded to computers at the organization's drop-in center computer lab. The surveys were conducted online using Qualtrics Software and approved by drop in center leadership.

Participant/Location of Research

The study focused on 22 LGBTQ high school graduates who were 18 years of age and older, who recently completed the 2018–2019 academic year at a metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia high school. The proper channels were used by the researcher to gain the access to the research setting. The actual research took place at a local LGBTQ center located in the Grant Park area of Atlanta, Georgia. The sample consisted of 22 LGBTQ high school students who were 18 and who visit a local community center in Atlanta, Georgia.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher ensured the instruments validity and reliability by developing the instrument in collaboration with the research faculty in the educational leadership

department. The researcher submitted the instruments and obtained approval to conduct the study from the university's institution review board. The researcher identified a contact person from the GHGC organization to assist with administering the survey instruments. The researcher provided participants with electronic surveys, using survey Qualtrics Software. The researcher received the electronic survey notifications once completed. The researcher downloaded all responses from the surveys directly into an encrypted file.

Description of Data Analysis Methods

The qualitative portion of the research study was used to analyze any emergent themes. The data collected and analyzed was based on measuring the variables on a nominal scale. According to Creswell (2013) , qualitative research begins based on assumptions where the principal researcher is encouraged to use theoretical frameworks to guide the study and address the social or human problems. The key characteristics of this study included conducting research in the participant's most comfortable setting, which was the community center. The researcher set-up/conducted one focus group session and five interviews with members of the LGBTQ community who expressed having self-actualization issues while in high school or in college. The focus group session was transcribed as noted and themes derived. The final objective was to code the focus groups in order to analyze the data.

Summary

This chapter consisted of the information regarding the methods and procedure in data collection. By using a mixed method design, the study tested the independent factors: family support, attendance, school climate, bullying, home support and acceptance, and self-actualization. Both the survey administered to the high school graduates and interviews were utilized as a data collection method. Credibility was practiced ensure privacy and cogency of the study.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

This chapter represents the results of a mixed methods research study where two data instruments were used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. This chapter also provides information on the participants' demographics and their feelings toward the topic. An analysis of the quantitative data from the surveys and qualitative data from the interviews are also presented.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between the external factors that influence academic performance and self-actualization amongst LGBTQ high school graduates who were 18 years of age and older. Miller and Cameron (2011) agreed that the mixed method design has been used extensively and has been accepted in the field of education and stated, "Mixed methodologies refer to approaches in which quantitative and qualitative research techniques are integrated into a single study" (p. 389). The mixture of quantitative and qualitative designs can also provide a better understanding of the problem (Miller & Cameron, 2011). The mixed method helps the researcher to better understand the participants, allowing the researcher to use multiple data sources to make stronger conclusions. This chapter contains a presentation of the results of the analysis of the data, based on the research questions determined by the theoretical framework.

The researcher obtained permission to perform the study from Clark Atlanta's institutional review board. The researcher then requested and obtained approval from the director of the community center for a select group of members to participate in the research (see Appendix C). Protocols for the research included a survey and interviews. An electronic consent form was provided and initialed by each participant.

The researcher sought to examine how academic performance and self-actualization are impacted by outside factors such as school climate, bullying, attendance, and more. Confidentiality and ethical issues were addressed during data collection by having the director of the community center explain the purpose of the study to all 22 participants before starting the survey. Moreover, the three interviewees were given the same practice. As the researcher, I promised to protect the anonymity of the survey and interviews by ensuring each person his or her name would not appear on or be stored near data sources.

The research questions were aligned to the research protocols and survey instruments and interview questions (see Table 1). Table 1 displays the research questions, survey items, and Interview questions. The table also shows the correlation and alignment for readers to better understand.

Table 1

Alignment of Research Questions to Research Protocols

#	Research question	Survey items	Interview questions
1	What factors or experiences support LGBTQ students' efforts to strive toward self-actualization in high school?	18, 22, 28, 31	1,6,8
2	What factors or experiences interfere with LGBTQ high school students' efforts to strive toward academic performance?	16, 17, 19, 21, 29	5
3	What can be discussed about LGBTQ high school students' perceptions and attitudes regarding campus climate (including perceptions of discrimination, support, and bullying.	23–27, 29, 30, 32, 33	1, 2, 4,

The grade-point average of the participants ranged from 0.0 to 4.0, with a mean of 2.94 (SD = 1.00). Table 2 speaks to the demographics of those who completed the survey. Certain questions were asked that captured gender identity, which means “a person's perception of having a particular gender, which may or may not correspond with their birth sex,” ethnicity, race, and the highest education level completed.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Gender identity		
Male	16	76.2
Female	2	9.5
Trans-woman	2	9.5
Queer	2	4.8
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	1	5.3
Latino	1	5.3
None of these	17	89.5
Race		
White	1	5.0
Black or African American	19	95.0
Highest education completed		
Junior (Grade 11)	2	10.0
Senior (Grade 12)	4	20.0
High school graduate	3	15.0
Some college	2	10.0
Graduated 2-year college	3	15.0
Graduated 4-year college	4	20.0
Postgraduate	2	10.0

Table 3 captures what time respondents go to sleep and get up in the mornings. The information was collected to compare if academic performance and self-actualization were affected amongst those interviewed. The data shows that majority of respondents went to bed between 11pm-1am and woke up for school by 7am. The research later showed that these variables impacted our independent variable (s).

Table 3

Sleep Patterns of Respondents

Question	<i>n</i>	%
Time go to bed		
8 pm–10 pm	4	23.5
11 pm–1 am	13	76.5
Time get up		
5 am	1	5.9
6 am	5	29.4
7 am	9	52.9
8 am	2	11.8

The data in Table 4 ask about the reason's respondents went to school. The majority stated that education was important for them and that's what motivated them. The second most common reason was they were encouraged by a parent/guardian, and the third was to see friends, which was surprising. The least response was to participate in after-school activities. When looking at the data, it seems education was very important to those surveyed and it was a strong driver for many to succeed.

Table 4

Reasons Participants Go to School

#	Response	<i>N</i>	%
1	To eat breakfast or lunch.	1	2.8
2	My education is important.	12	33.3
3	My parent/guardian encourages me to attend.	11	30.6
4	To see my friends.	6	16.7
5	Coming to school helps me stay out of trouble.	2	5.6
6	My classes are interesting.	3	8.3
7	I want to participate in after-school activities.	1	2.8

The data in Table 5 speaks to the role attendance (unexcused absences and tardies) play on academic performance. The data states that 12 respondents had 1-3 unexcused absences that their guardians did not know about and 58.8% admitted to being tardy “sometimes” which was a little under half the time.

Table 5

Number of Unexcused Absences and Tardies

Item	<i>n</i>	%
Number of unexcused absences from high school before guardians were alerted		
1–3	12	70.6
4–6	3	17.7
7–10	2	11.8

(continued)

Item	<i>n</i>	%
Number times tardy in high school		
Never	5	29.4
Sometimes	10	58.8
About half the time	1	5.9
Most of the time	1	5.9
Always	0	0.0

Table 6 speaks to why respondents missed school and when they miss school who notices. 32.3% of respondents answered that they usually miss school when they are sick. After conducting this study, I realized that “sick” could be very broad and should have been broken down even more. 25.8% reported that they cannot wake up on time, which correlates with the bedtime question. 48.3% stated that the teacher notices them when absent, but that makes sense especially since the teacher is responsible for collecting this information daily.

Table 6

Participants’ Responses—Missing School

Item	<i>n</i>	%
Reasons participants miss school.		
I cannot wake up on time.	8	25.8
I have difficulty getting to and from school.	1	3.2
I don’t care about getting good grades.	3	9.7

(continued)

Item	<i>n</i>	%
I don't understand the material.	2	6.5
I am being bullied because of my sexuality or the way I look.	2	6.5
I am sick.	10	32.3
I am concerned about my safety at school.	2	6.5
I am concerned about my safety on my way to school.	3	9.7
Who misses them when they are absent from school		
Teacher	14	48.3
Principal	0	0.0
Guidance Counselor	1	3.5
Parent or Guardian	6	20.7
Another family member	0	0.0
Friends	7	24.1
Nobody	1	3.5

The data in Table 7 speak to the participants experiences with bullying. The questions ask about witnessing bullying, personal experiences with bullying, how ones were bullied, have anyone ever missed school or felt unsafe due to bullying, and why bullying happens; 6% or 35.3% stated that they witnessed someone being bullied at least 1-2 times per month. Almost 50% had a personal experience with bullying, and over 33% stated they had been bullied by being called names and teased because they were part of LGBTQ community; 82.4% mentioned they never missed school or felt unsafe due to bullying, and 20.8% stated bullies bully because they want to show off, and 18.8% stated feeling insecure causes someone to bully others, and 7% in two different categories state they bullies lack love and attention and they mimic what they see at home.

Table 7

Participants' Bullying Experiences

Question	<i>n</i>	%
Have witnessed bullying		
Never	5	29.4
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	6	35.3
About half the time (1 or 2 times a week)	4	23.5
Everyday	1	5.9
Always	1	5.9
Personal experience with bullying		
Never	8	47.1
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	6	35.3
About half the time (1 or 2 times a week)	1	5.9
Most of the time	2	11.8
How participants were bullied		
I haven't been bullied	8	33.3
I have been teased and called names	8	33.3
I have been hit, kicked, or pushed	2	8.3
Others leave me out of their group	3	12.5
Others bully me by phone or text message	1	4.2
Others bully me using social media	2	8.3
Missed school because felt unsafe on way to or from school and at school		
Never	14	82.4
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	3	17.7

(continued)

Question	<i>n</i>	%
About half the time (1 or 2 times a week)	0	0.0
Every day	0	0.0
Why bullying happens		
I don't know	1	2.1
They think it is fun	8	16.7
They identify as a member of the LGBTQ community	6	12.5
They want to show off	10	20.8
They feel insecure	9	18.8
They need love and attention	7	14.6
They mimic what they see at home	7	14.6

The data collected in Table 8 show the responses respondents had towards Self-Actualization. 17 respondents people find them boring, 17 respondents felt they mess up everything they touch, 17 mentioned they feel as though they let those they care about down, 16 stated they will never amount to anything or anyone significant, 17 think they are a failure, 17 feel what they feel about themselves is more important than what others think. 17 felt they deserve to be loved and respected, 17 said they will never be as skilled as they would like, 17 stated that being themselves guarantees people will dislike them, 17 stated they don't feel they have done a good job unless someone points it out, 16 stated that they like themselves.

Table 8

Participants' Responses Toward Self-Actualization Items

#	Item	<i>n</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	I think that overall, people find me boring to talk to.	17	1	7	4.82	2.23
2	I mess up everything I touch.	17	1	7	5.41	1.97
3	I feel as though I let those I care about down.	17	2	7	5.06	2.01
4	I will never amount to anything or anyone significant.	16	1	7	5.75	1.95
5	I think I am a failure.	17	3	7	5.71	1.64
6	How I feel about myself is more important than others' opinions of me.	17	1	5	2.18	1.15
7	I deserve to be loved and respected.	17	1	3	1.59	0.77
8	I will never be as skilled or as smart as I should be.	17	1	7	5.00	2.14
9	Being myself guarantees that people will dislike me.	17	1	7	5.06	1.89
10	I am not confident I've done a good job unless someone else points it out.	17	1	7	4.65	2.27
11	I like myself.	16	1	4	1.81	0.95

The data in Table 9 illustrate the respondent's feelings towards family acceptability: 64.7% stated they come from a religious background, 64.7% came from a spiritual back ground, 29.4% stated they would be offended if someone asked them about their sexual orientation they would be offended, 17.7% stated they don't feel there family accepts who they really are, 23.5 % stated that there family would not be accepting if they were to say there were homosexual, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

Table 9

Participants' Responses Toward Family Acceptability

#	Item	yes		somewhat		no	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
1	Do you come from a religious background?	11	64.7	3	17.7	3	17.7
2	Do you come from a spiritual background?	11	64.7	2	11.8	4	23.5
3	Would your family be accepting if you were homosexual, lesbian, bisexual, transgender?	3	17.6	9	52.9	5	29.4
4	If your family asked about your sexual orientation would you be offended?	5	29.4	6	35.3	6	35.3
5	Does your family accept you for who you truly are?	6	35.3	8	47.1	3	17.7

The data set in Table 10 speaks to respondents' feelings about family support. 41.% stated they feel they can talk to their parent/guardian about anything, 17.7% stated they cannot talk to their parent/guardian about anything. 76.5% stated they feel their guardian cares about their academic performance, 5.9 stated nobody cares, and 82.4% stated they feel safe at home and 17.7% said they feel safe sometimes.

Table 10

Participants' Responses Toward Family Support

#	Item	yes		sometimes		no	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
1	Can you talk to your parents /guardian about anything?	7	41.2	7	41.2	3	17.7
2	Do your parents/guardian care about your academic performance?	13	76.5	3	17.7	1	5.9
3	Do you feel safe at home?	14	82.4	3	17.7	0	0.0

The data in Table 11 show internal support while in school. Amongst the 5 questions in this category the Min-M-Max were 99% aligned. The questions ranged from asking if school counselors were available, teachers asking about your weekend, who notices things you try and hide, are you apart of any clubs , and are you able to ask your teachers and counselors for help when you need it. The standard deviation ranged from 1.19 to 2.18.

Table 11

Participants' Responses Toward Internal Support (In-School)

#	Item	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	Are school counselors readily available to help?	17	1	7	3.00	1.61
2	Do your teachers ask about your weekend?	17	1	7	4.71	1.81
3	Do your teachers notice things you're trying to hide?	17	1	7	4.06	1.89
4	You are part of clubs at school.	17	1	7	3.18	2.18
5	You are able to ask your teachers and counselors for help.	17	1	6	2.47	1.19

Table 12 describes school climate. The questions ranged from asking questions like, are most kids nice and happy, have you ever been made fun of, does your school offer LGBTQ clubs, are you comfortable with students who are openly gay or lesbian, are any of your friends LGBTQ, do you know what LGBTQ means, and do LGBTQ students receive special attention from teachers and counselors. The SD ranged from 1.00-2.71 which is a pretty even response sample.

Table 12

Participants' Responses Toward School Climate

#	Item	<i>n</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	Are most kids nice and happy?	17	1	3	1.71	0.57
2	Have you ever been made fun of?	17	1	3	1.47	0.70
3	Does your school offer LGBTQ clubs?	17	1	3	2.65	0.68
4	Are you comfortable with students who are openly gay or lesbian?	17	1	3	1.65	0.76
5	Are any of your friend's LGBTQ?	17	1	3	1.24	0.55
6	Do you know what LGBTQ means?	17	1	1	1.00	0.00
7	Do LGBTQ students receive special attention from teachers and counselors?	17	2	3	2.71	0.46

The data in Table 13 represent School Safety. The questions surveyed respondents feelings about feeling safe while at school, the school being equipped with a safety protocol , does your school practice drills from emergencies, do you feel safe while in class, at lunch, leaving school , and have you ever been attacked for being yourself while at school. The SD ranged from 0.69-1.11.

Table 13

Participants' Responses Toward School Safety

#	Item	<i>n</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	Do you feel safe while at school?	17	1	3	1.47	0.78
2	Does your school have a safety protocol?	16	1	4	1.75	1.03

(continued)

#	Item	<i>n</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
3	Does your school have practice drills for emergencies?	17	1	4	1.76	1.11
4	Do you feel safe while in class?	17	1	3	1.53	0.70
5	Do you feel safe during lunch?	17	1	3	1.41	0.69
6	Do you feel safe when leaving school?	17	1	3	1.47	0.70
7	Have you ever been attacked for being yourself while at school?	17	1	4	3.06	1.06

According to responses from the three interviews conducted, academic performance and self-actualization are affected by things such as school climate, bullying, attendance, family support, sexual orientation, social clubs, and more. The repetitive comments about acceptance and being comfortable suggest that regardless of your skin color and family upbringing that being LGBTQ creates a bond of engagement for many members of this community. The research questions were tied with the survey items and interview questions. Each person who was interviewed answered the same questions.

1. What was your experience in high school?
2. What variables impacted and impeded on your journey to self-actualization?
3. What were the barriers that interfered with your academic performance?
4. Did your school have clubs and groups that helped you process things such as discrimination, bullying, lack of support?

The following shows the common themes derived from the lived experiences of those interviewed.

Description of Interview Participants and Responses

Kala

Born in Charlotte NC, and now living with her family in Atlanta Ga, 26- year-old “Kala” considers herself to be “half and half” – half closeted about her bisexuality and half out. She is out to immediate family despite their conservative beliefs and the disappointment she senses from her very rigid father. Kala is a senior in college and has been highly involved on campus. When she was in high school, she loved the fact that she had clubs where people like her attended and made her feel comfortable. Kala mentioned that without this type of socialization her transitioning into college and being more Intune with herself would much harder. Kala is now working within the school systems and acknowledges that she sees how various factors within a school system can affect a student’s academic achievement and impede on their self-actualization.

Dante

Dante finished a 2-year college and still vividly recalls the factors and experiences that colored his time as a gay male in high school. Dante spoke about him feeling safe while at school, class, lunch, walking home and how bullying affected his academic performance. However, he has been “pleasantly surprised” to find the school’s faculty, staff, and students “totally supportive” and “easy-going about everything except homework and test scores.” With regard to self-actualization, Dante recently turned 24 years old, confident that entering college life will help him attain peace with himself as a member of the LGBTQ community.

Marquis

As a very active high school student who dealt with sexual identity issues and lack of family support, Marquis once suffered with his grades because he was not able to be himself and always had to be someone he was not in the face of the public. Marquis academic achievement and self-actualization did not come till after he graduated, and he was able to be around people who really understood who he was and had lived some of the same experiences. Admittedly, his attendance to classes and involvement also was impacted because of the sexual identity barriers he faced. Having a space and people who understood him, was one of the many things that saved his life and made it him who he is today.

Summary

The analysis of the data collected during this study justified the independent variable the researcher was able to conduct observations over the course of a month, 3 interviews and 22 participant surveys. The reoccurring themes that emerged from the research include attendance, school climate, bullying, acceptance, family support, and family understanding, sexual identity acceptance. Overall, this chapter displayed the research strategies used during data collection, which coincided with the research questions.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Purpose of the Study

This chapter focuses on the major findings from of the research that focused on the purpose the impacts attendance, self-love, family acceptability, family support, internal support, school climate, safety, and bullying have on the academic performance and self-actualization of high school graduates. The dependent variable for this study was academic performance/self-actualization and independent variables were attendance, self-love, family acceptability, family support, internal support, school climate, safety, and bullying.

The purpose of this chapter is to disclose the findings, implications and recommendations based on the study conducted. After analyzing the data, the researcher was able to establish school climate, family support, and family acceptability as major themes in relation to academic performance and a student reaching true self-actualization. This chapter outlines the major findings and the conclusion was highly based on self-love and family acceptability.

Findings

The researcher collected data from numerous participants through a survey. The data collection method included surveying twenty-two LGBTQ community members who were recent high school graduates.

The second method of data collection included interviewing three outside members of the LGBTQ community.

RQ1. What factors or experiences support LGBTQ student's efforts to strive toward self-actualization in high school?

- Those surveyed generally agreed that in order to reach self-actualization in high school they required lots of support, engagement, and self-love. The respondents really focused on family acceptance as being a main component to feeling good about themselves and not needing outside validation.
- During the interviews, two of the three interviewees said that while they were in high school, they lacked family support and self-love which impacted their academic performance and self-actualization.

RQ2. What factors or experiences interfere with LGBTQ high school students' efforts to strive toward academic performance?

- Seventeen of the 20 surveyed stated they believe lack of involvement from a parent/guardian impedes on a student's academic performance.
- One person during the interview stated that having an engaged parent who actually cared about grades, well-being, etc. was the primary motivation for their success.

RQ3. What can be discovered about LGBTQ high school students' perceptions and attitudes regarding campus climate (including their perceptions of discrimination, support, and bullying)?

- Almost all of the folks interviewed felt that bullying and discrimination changed the school climate and opened their eyes to the affects such things have on people.
- Ten of those surveyed had experienced some sort of bullying in their lifetime, which either stopped them from attending school on time daily or using the excuse of being sick just to skip school.
- During the interviews, three of the three interviewed stated they saw people getting bullied and never spoke up, which bothered them days and even years after witnessing such trauma.

Limitations of the Study

The following limitations occurred during data collection.

- The study took place in only one LGBTQ center.
- The researcher only collected data from a small sample size.
- The researcher only was able to interview 3 outsiders, but still apart of the LGBTQ community
- The lack of research on minority LGBTQ was a major limitation for this study. The research proved that “white counterparts” of the LGBTQ community had more data.
- This researcher worked diligently to remain aware of his positionality as an openly gay man throughout the research. It is possible, however, that his own biases may have influenced the data collection and data analysis processes.

- These findings suggest that all institutions of higher education must embark on greater consideration of the experiences of and the feedback (provided here and elsewhere) from underrepresented minorities, including but not limited to members of the LGBTQ community.

Further research should be conducted to determine the effects certain variables have on academic achievement and self-actualization. Further research can be conducted to determine the different types of variables that impede on academic research, other than those examined in this research study. The following themes are additional suggestions for research conductors to determine more factors that impact academic achievement and self-actualization on LGBTQ students.

Recommendations for All

- Further study into the role of LGBTQ clubs or student organizations.
- Examine the lived experiences of students at schools that have provided their LGBTQ club with a physical center (office space, event space, a concretely visible location for their gathering) versus those schools (like the research site of this study) that have not established such a space.
- The research design of this study and its findings may be helpful as a benchmark for other studies, including but not limited to studies of LGBTQ students, of other sexual minorities.
- More research on self-actualization of other groups of students; the LGBTQ sample may represent a dynamic found in other marginalized groups.

- Findings of this study are applicable to understanding broader populations in similar settings, but they are not intended to be universally transferrable
- Conduct research with a controlled experimental design.
- Conduct the current research on a larger scale with a large sample size and over a vast span of time.

Conclusion

Due to the commitment to privacy, learning, rules and regulations the LGBTQ drop-in center is one of the only examples in the Atlanta area of a safe space where members of this community can go to feel loved and valued. This study was able to influence parents, guardians, and LGBTQ high school graduates by outlining the impact attendance, self-love, family acceptability, family support, internal support, school climate, safety, and bullying have on the academic performance and self-actualization of high school graduates. The reemerging themes of family acceptability, family support, and bullying indicate that high schools, parents, guardians, and even students must take these factors into consideration while outlining education tools, policies and procedures, support groups, and more. These factors all should be considered when looking at how society affects education, which is coupled with academic performance and students reaching a level of self-actualization. Success of early interventions and helping all parties involved in a student's success is just the beginning of creating a healthy balance of support for all groups and communities.

APPENDIX A

Consent Form: Participants

External Factors That Influence Academic Performance and Self-Actualization of Recent LGBTQ High School Graduates

You are invited to be in a research study of examining external factors that Influence Academic Performance and Self-Actualization of Recent LGBTQ High School Graduates You were randomly selected to be a part of this study. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Marcus Bolton, graduate student at Clark Atlanta University

Background Information

The purpose of this study is: The purpose of this study is to bring more awareness to the barriers that prohibit proper academic matriculation to those who identify themselves or labeled LGBTQ. The study hopes to enhance already established resources and system that support the LGBTQ students upon entering high school in the metro Atlanta area.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things.

Complete 20 minute on-line survey

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study

There is no risk for being a part of this study.

Benefits: Your voice/opinion heard to help future researchers along with supporting those of marginalized groups.

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researchers will have access to the records. All data will be destroyed 12 months from the date you complete the online survey.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your decision to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the researcher, or Clark Atlanta University. All survey participants have the freedom to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships previously identified. If/when you would like to withdraw from the study, please email marcusbolton@me.com and indicate your unique identifier provided to you when you signed up for the study. All request will be processed within 24 hours of your submission.

Contacts and Questions

The researchers conducting this study are (state all and give contact information)

Marcus Bolton (984.227.4137/marcusbolton@me.com)

Dr. Barbara Hill bhill@cau.edu

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact the researcher(s) at: Phone: (984.227.4137)

Students Advisors: Dr. Barbara Hill (bhill@cau.edu)

If you have any questions now, or later, related to the integrity of the research, (the rights of research subjects or research-related injuries, where applicable), you are encouraged to contact Dr. Georgianna Bolden at the Office of Sponsored Programs (404 880-6979) or Dr. Paul I. Musey, (404) 880-6829 at Clark Atlanta University.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of Investigator _____ Date _____

APPENDIX B

Survey

The questionnaire should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your responses are completely anonymous and will not be shared with anyone. If you have any questions about the survey, please email me: marcusbolton@me.com
I really appreciate your input!

How do you Identify?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Trans-Woman
- ☐ Trans-Man
- ☐ Non-Binary
- ☐ Queer
- ☐ Other

What is your month and year of birth? _____

Are you Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino or none of these (select all that apply)?

- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Latino
- ☐ None of these

Choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be:

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Other (specify)

What is the highest grade or level of school that you have completed?

- ☐ Freshman (Grade 9)
- ☐ Sophomore (Grade 10)
- ☐ Junior (Grade 11)
- ☐ Senior (Grade 12)
- ☐ High School Graduate
- ☐ Some college
- ☐ Graduated 2-year college
- ☐ Graduated 4-year college
- ☐ Postgraduate

What is your current GPA (4.0 Scale)? _____

What time do you fall asleep on a school night?

- _____ 8 pm–10 pm
 _____ 11 pm–1 am

What time do you usually wake up in the morning on a school day?

- _____ 5 am
 _____ 6 am
 _____ 7 am
 _____ 8 am

What are the top three reasons you go to school?

- _____ To eat breakfast or lunch
 _____ My Education is important
 _____ My parent/guardian encourages me to attend
 _____ Coming to school helps me stay out of trouble
 _____ My classes are interesting
 _____ I want to participate in after-school activities

Do you know how many unexcused absences you can have before you will receive a letter or phone call home?

- _____ 1-3
 _____ 4-6
 _____ 7-10

How often are you late to school?

- _____ Never
 _____ Sometimes
 _____ About half the time
 _____ Most of the time Always

When you miss school, what are the top three reasons?

- _____ I cannot wake up on time
 _____ I have difficulty getting to and from school
 _____ I don't care about getting good grades
 _____ I don't understand the material
 _____ I am being bullied because of my sexuality or the way I look
 _____ I am sick
 _____ I am concerned about my safety at school
 _____ I am concerned about my safety on my way to school

Who notices if you miss school? (check all that apply)

- _____ Teacher
 _____ Principal
 _____ Guidance Counselor
 _____ Parent or Guardian
 _____ Another family member
 _____ Friends
 _____ Nobody

During the school year (2018) how often have you seen someone bullied?

- _____ Never
- _____ Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)
- _____ About half the time (1 or 2 times a week)
- _____ Everyday
- _____ Always

During the last school year (2018) how often have you been bullied at school?

- _____ Never
- _____ Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)
- _____ About half the time (1 or 2 times a week)
- _____ Most of the time Always
- _____ I haven't been bullied
- _____ I have been teased and called names
- _____ I have been hit, kicked or pushed
- _____ Others leave me out of their group
- _____ Others bully me by phone or text message
- _____ Others bully me using social media

During the past year how often did you miss school because you felt unsafe, uncomfortable, or nervous at school or on your way to or from school?

- _____ Never
- _____ Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)
- _____ About half the time (1 or 2 times a week)
- _____ Every day

Why do some kids bully other kids? (Check all that apply)

- _____ I don't know
- _____ They think it is fun
- _____ They identify as a member of the LGBTQ community
- _____ They want to show off
- _____ They feel insecure
- _____ They need love and attention
- _____ They mimic what they see at home

Self-Actualization

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree 1	Agree 2	Somewhat agree 3	Neither agree nor agree 4	Somewhat disagree 5	Disagree 6	Strongly disagree 7	
I think that overall, people find me boring to talk to.						1	2	3 4 5 6 7
I mess up everything I touch.						1	2	3 4 5 6 7
I feel as though I let those I care about down.						1	2	3 4 5 6 7
I will never amount to anything or anyone significant.						1	2	3 4 5 6 7
I think I am a failure.						1	2	3 4 5 6 7
How I feel about myself is more important than others' opinions of me.						1	2	3 4 5 6 7

Strongly agree 1	Agree 2	Somewhat agree 3	Neither agree nor disagree 4	Somewhat disagree 5	Disagree 6	Strongly disagree 7
I deserve to be loved and respected.					1	2 3 4 5 6 7
I will never be as skilled or as smart as I should be.					1	2 3 4 5 6 7
Being myself guarantees that people will dislike me.					1	2 3 4 5 6 7
I am not confident I've done a good unless someone else points it out.					1	2 3 4 5 6 7
I like myself.					1	2 3 4 5 6 7

Family Acceptability

Do you come from a religious background?	Yes	Somewhat	No
Do you come from a spiritual background?	Yes	Somewhat	No
Would your family be accepting if you were homosexual, lesbian? bisexual, transgender?	Yes	Somewhat	No
If your family asked about your sexual orientation would you be offended?	Yes	Somewhat	No
Does your family accept you for who you truly are?	Yes	Somewhat	No

Family Support

Can you talk to your parents /guardian about anything?	Yes	Sometimes	No
Do your parents/guardian care about your academic performance?	Yes	Sometimes	No
Do you feel safe at home?	Yes	Sometimes	No

Internal (In-School) Support

Strongly agree 1	Agree 2	Somewhat agree 3	Neither agree nor disagree 4	Somewhat disagree 5	Disagree 6	Strongly disagree 7
Are school counselors readily available to help?					1	2 3 4 5 6 7
Do your teachers ask about your weekend?					1	2 3 4 5 6 7
Do your teachers notice things you're trying to hide?					1	2 3 4 5 6 7
You are part of clubs at school.					1	2 3 4 5 6 7
You are able to ask your teachers and counselors for help.					1	2 3 4 5 6 7

School Climate

Are most kids nice and happy?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Never
Have you ever been made fun of?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Never
Does your school offer LGBTQ clubs?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Never

Are you comfortable with students who are? openly gay or lesbian?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Never
Are any of your friend's LGBTQ?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Never
Do you know what LGBTQ means?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Never
Do LGBTQ students receive special attention? from teachers and counselors?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Never

School Safety

Do you feel safe while at school?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Never
Does your school have a safety protocol?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Never
Does your school have practice drills for emergencies?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Never
Do you feel safe while in class?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Never
Do you feel safe during lunch?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Never
Do you feel safe when leaving school?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Never
Have you ever been attacked for being yourself while at school?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Never

APPENDIX C

GHGC Permission to Conduct Research

Get HIP Get Connected

4/5/2019

Marcus Dwayne Bolton
7330 Thoreau Circle
Atlanta Ga, 30349

Dear Marcus Bolton,

I have reviewed your request to conduct a research project involving the Get Hip Get Connected Drop-In Center along with your CAU IRB Approval, methodology and survey that will be used. I feel that this project will be beneficial to Get Hip Get Connected.

You have my permission to move forward with your research effective 4/9/2019 on "The external factors that impact LGBTQ 12th graders academic performance in metro Atlanta: Implications for educational leaders".

This approval covers you using the centers drop-in center and computer lab to survey 20-30 High School Students who are 18 and older.

The following stipulations should be observed: Conduct survey during business hours with staff present, the company name should be disguised in the project, results must be shared with the organization, department, and so forth.

If you have any questions regarding this letter of approval, please give me a call. As requested, our 501c3 Letter is attached.

Rameses Frederick
Executive Director

(404)532-9678

rameses@gethipgetconnected.org

www.gethipgetconnected.org

@gethipgetconnected



APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

1. What are your experiences or what have you seen when it comes to deal with LGBTQ support and striving toward self-actualization in high school?
2. In your opinion what factors or experiences interfere with LGBTQ high school students' efforts to strive toward academic performance?
3. What are your perceptions and attitudes regarding campus climate (including your perceptions of discrimination, support, and bullying)?
4. What other things can be discovered about LGBTQ high school students?

APPENDIX E

IRB Approval Letter



CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board
Office of Sponsored Programs

December 15, 2018

Mr. Marcus Dwayne Bolton <Marcus.bolton@students.cau.edu>
Educational Leadership
School of Education, CAU
318 Rufus Clement Hall
Atlanta, GA 30314

RE: The external factors that impact LGBTQ 23 graders academic performance at two metro Atlanta High Schools: Implications for educational leaders

Principal Investigator(s): Marcus Bolton
Human Subjects Code Number: HR2018-12-828-1

Dear Mr. Bolton:

The Human Subjects Committee of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your protocol and approved of it as exempt in accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

Your Protocol Approval Code is HR201812-828-1/A
Type of Review: Expedited

This permit will expire on December 14, 2019. Thereafter, continued approval is contingent upon the annual submission of a renewal form to this office.

The CAU IRB acknowledges your timely completion of the CITI IRB Training in Protection of Human Subjects – “Social and Behavioral Sciences Track.”

Your CITI certification expires on August 27, 2020.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office or Dr. Paul I. Musey (404) 880-6337.

Sincerely:

Paul I. Musey, Ph.D.
Chair, IRB
Human Subjects Committee

APPENDIX F

Parental Consent Form

External Factors that Influence Academic Performance and Self-Actualization of recent LGBTQ High School Graduates

You are invited to be in a research study of examining external factors that can impact LGBTQ High School Graduates overall academic performance and self-actualization.

You were randomly selected to be a part of this study. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Marcus Bolton, graduate student at Clark Atlanta

University Background Information

The purpose of this study: The purpose of this study is to bring more awareness to the barriers that prohibit proper academic matriculation to those who identify themselves or labeled LGBTQ. The study hopes to enhance already established resources and system that support the LGBTQ students upon entering/exiting high school.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things. Complete 20-minute on-line survey

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study

There is no risk for being a part of this study. **Benefits:** Your voice/opinion heard to help future researchers along with supporting those of marginalized groups.

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researchers will have access to the records. All data will be destroyed 12 months from the date you complete the online survey.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your decision to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the researcher, or Clark Atlanta University or with other cooperating institutions. All survey participants have the freedom to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships

previously identified. If/when you would like to withdraw from the study, please email marcusbolton@me.com and indicate your unique identifier provided to you when you signed up for the study. All request will be processed within 24 hours of your submission.

Contacts and Questions

The researchers conducting this study are (state all and give contact information)

Marcus Bolton: marcusbolton@students.cau.edu or 984-227-4137

Barbara Hill: bhill@cau.edu

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact the researcher(s) at: Phone: (984.227.4137)

Student Advisor: Dr. Barbara Hill - bhill@cau.edu

If you have any questions now, or later, related to the integrity of the research, (the rights of research subjects or research-related injuries, where applicable), you are encouraged to contact Dr. Georgianna Bolden at the Office of Sponsored Programs (404 880-6979) or Dr. Paul I. Musey (404) 880-6829 at Clark Atlanta University.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature of Volunteer _____ Date _____

Signature of Investigator _____ Date _____

NOTE: Children under the age of (18) require the permission of their parent(s) or legal guardians to participate in any type of research.

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